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# News Release

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 31, 2010

### **VA Black Hills Chaplain Service recognized for Excellence in Service to Veterans**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Black Hills Health Care System's Chaplain Service has been presented with three separate awards recognizing their commitment, dedication and excellence providing spiritual service to Veterans.

The 2009 Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23 Director's Network "Star Award" and the "Best Practices Award" from the National Director of Chaplain Services was presented to the VA Black Hills team for excellence in Chaplain Spiritual Assessment. The team, comprised of chaplain, clinical and technical staff, were honored for developing an automated system to track updates of spiritual assessments and follow-up for Veterans residing in the Community Living Centers at VA Black Hills Health Care System. The new system ensures that the spiritual needs of our Veterans are being met and alerts staff automatically to assessment needs ensuring a greater degree of accuracy for this critical component of chaplain ministry.

Chaplain William Zandri was selected for the "VA Secretary Award Program for Excellence in Chaplain Service" and will receive his award from Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in Washington, DC. A decorated Vietnam Veteran, Chaplain Zandri makes himself available 24/7 for any Veteran needs. Chaplain Zandri is known to provide an impressive ministry of presence, active listening, offering blessings for all patients, praying with staff, family member and patient alike. Chaplain Zandri conducts frequent committal, memorial and funeral services for Veterans of all faiths, as well as for their family members. He is called upon to conduct services at the Black Hills National Cemetery. He is recognized by his peers, nursing and medical staff, family members, Veterans and volunteers as one who willingly goes, "the extra mile", to serve the Veterans that come to VA Black Hills for care and support. His life is built upon Service to God through Service to Others.

“I am immensely proud of Chaplain Services,” said Chaplain Rene Porter Stewart, Chief of Chaplain Service at VA Black Hills. “For our accomplishments as a team and for our individual contributions we are proud to serve America’s heroes through our ministry.”

For more information on Chaplain Services or any of the awards contact Porter Stewart at 605-720-7345.



Left to right: Peter Henry, Director, Chaplain Ralph Vencil, Jill Baird, Clinical Support, Rene’Porter Stewart, Chief Chaplain Service



Left to right: Peter Henry , Director, Chaplain William Zandri

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